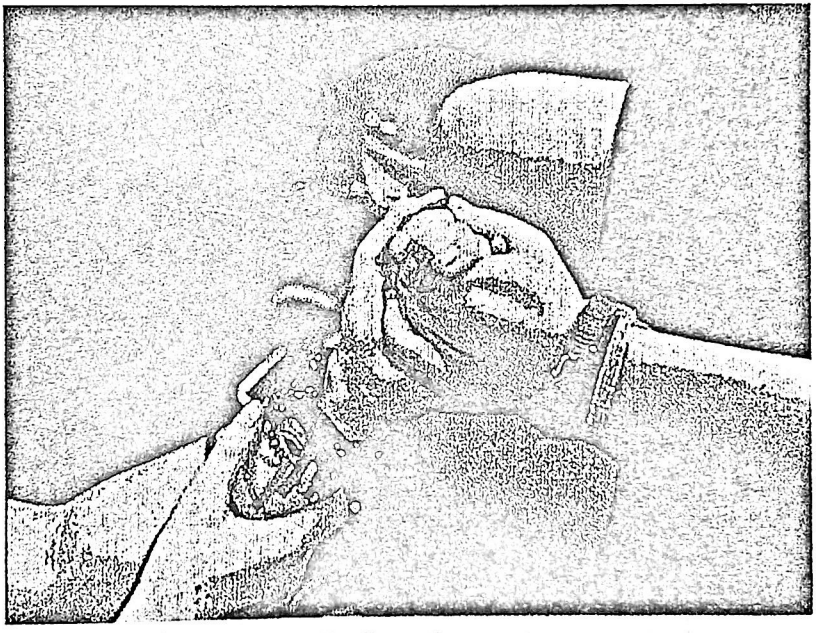
TIME TO DISAPPEAR

ISSUE #8 Part I



"THESE FRIENDS THAT I CALL HOME"

This is the 8th issue of "Time to Disappear..."
Hopefully the next one will be better.

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PART I

1.New York City is no longer my home.

After years of tearing the vocal cords from my throat over and over again trying to prove NY wrong, I left. For a long time "home" was simply the place where I wrote list after list; lists of all the reasons to leave, all the reasons not to ride those empty streets any more. So much time had been spent balling my fists and hitting my sides in a torrent of not feeling, trying to make bruises, to break capillaries underneath the skin I wasn't even sure existed anymore. And I still wish that I had more to show from all the time spent there, more to show for all of this by now. All the dreams and realities were supposed to have melded. Become indistinguishable from each other and the outside forces that seem to work so hard against them.

So I packed my stuff into the trunk of a friends car, and moved 1200 miles to a town in the center of the country. Ran towards porch swings and community gardens, towards a big house full of beautiful people and amazing work to be done. Towards the boy that I love. And, while the most amazing people I have ever met, and I think, will ever meet, have been carving niches into the cement of NY. I just didn't have the strength or courage to fight for that place anymore. Couldn't fake it any longer.

While, I do miss Brooklyn, and Tompkins and the libraries and all the gardens on the les, and alt.coffee, and abc no rio, and piss alley, and gorilla coffee, and kates stoop, and that spot Emily and I would go to smoke cigarettes where our parents wouldn't find us, and sweaty house shows, and the Manhattan bridge, and critical mass being huge and sometimes scary, all the avenues being empty at four in the morning, and seeing the sunrise over eighth street. Knowing that I made the right choice is the best feeling in the world. Getting here late on a Thursday and being greeted with hugs and warm welcomes from my new housemates I almost cried with fucking joy. There are so few times where I can look behind me and respect the choices I have made, and this is one of those times.

Lawrence was an easy choice, but not the one I would have

made on my own. The thought to pick up the life I had been carefully constructing, and relocate it to Lawrence, Kansas wouldn't have happened if it weren't for Dave. And I should thank him more often then I do.

Dave came into my life via chance circumstance and embarrassingly enough, the internet. We became friends a few years ago, but it was a friendship based on clicking computer keys and photoshopped snap shots. It had been about a year and a half since we talked last and we hadn't physically met until he swept through NY for two days. I can look back on a lot of moments and realize their importance in hindsight. They seemed inconsequential at the time, but really they are the moments, the fractions of seconds that make me who I am today. Walking into that coffee shop on eighth street is one of those moments. He and kate were sitting there, and with the first hello I knew there had been that catch behind the eyes kind of recognition. Corneas and cones addicted themselves to the sight of him. There was something about his beautiful long eyelashes, something about the curve of his shoulders, something about the way he strung his words together. There was something about him.

He asked if he could crash at my house, the one with the poor ventilation and drug riddled bodies pretending to be college students. He came over and we rambled across the kitchen table at each other for a few hours. Our different angles shaped a perfect conversation. Eventually conversations drifted into watching movies and cuddling. He held my hand and kissed me. And I swear to god, the fucking world stopped in that moment. As cliché as it is, very few things have been the same since.

Since those first few days we spent with each other we've talked every day, run up phone bills, and filled e-mail in boxes. He sent me a package with pictures I pasted into my journal, and a tape I listened to three times straight through. When he told me he loved me, I got angry, so fucking angry. I was frustrated with him being 1,200 miles away. I didn't think it was fair for someone so far away to say something like that. Sabotage is what I know best, and my first instinct was to warn him; to tell him that I was too crazy to love. I told him that I wouldn't wish myself

on anyone, especially him. All of which I still think is true, but I'm learning, because I love him, too. It took me a while to realize it, and when I did it was a revelation in every sense of the word. It hit me on some random night stalking the streets of Brooklyn. The words " I love him" slipped out of my mouth before I really had the chance to over-analyze them like everything else. And thank fucking god, because the sense of relief and the sense of elation that came with that statement was immense. Really I spoke it as truth. Because the entanglement was so great, it has affected everything I've done since then. And most of the time I can't believe that I lived so long with out this feeling. Without the completion that having him in my life brings me. Whether were 1,200 miles apart or sitting right next to each other.

A long time ago I realized how much of my life was spent inside a world created in my head, and how detrimental that can be. Specifically, when it came to my fairy tale ideas of love and romance, of happily ever afters, I fell into the trap set by all the generations that have come before. Generations of people, of womyn, were told that their self worth was based upon someone loving them, and that love is only cinderella stories and knights in shining armor. I believed it for so long, believed that I was less then a person because no one loved me. That I had some inherit flaw in my design keeping me from having the picturesque relationship. That created a cycle of disappointments, and self-deprecation. Reality will never live up to what were told it should be. Because the reality of being in love, of being loved surpasses and re-writes all the truths I thought I knew.

The relationship I'm in now is better then any fantasy I have ever had. The great parts and the rough parts, the moments of complete joy, and the moments of anger and frustration all create the relationship I have been waiting for. It's the lack of fantasy, the lack of perfection that makes me so fucking happy.

2. I have lived in four different homes since December of last year.

I've slept through classes because of a basement with no

natural light, and I've stared at the childhood walls of my mothers' home. I've gone 1,200 miles to a place I thought I'd live at forever, only to have it sold two months later. Now I live in a house with a big back yard and a porch I don't use anymore because I quit smoking.

Of all those places I like where I'm at now the most. It feels like home in the ways that none of the others did. Maybe it's the fact that we all started in this place at the same time. There are no previous memories, no secrets or inside jokes that I don't get, no past partners still lingering in bedrooms. It's all ours the seven of us turning a pre-civil war house on the edge of east Lawrence into a place we like to call home.

And I have a routine here. Which in the past seemed like a hindrance, something holding me back from things I thought I wanted. Being entrenched in this place has made me realize that my past need for flexibility was a defense mechanism. When I got scared or the world got too big to handle, I wanted to be able to run. Living without the ability to run and hide, or even the want really, has made me happier then I've ever been before. Because my days are full of things now. I don't lounge around places, I don't feel bored and un-enthusiastic like I used to. All those days and weeks sitting in Tompkins were not a waste in full, I made the friendships that I hold dear there, but the time. I want that time back. I want those days back, and I want that youth back, or at least I never want to repeat those mistakes of mismanagement.

I spent my time poorly, found comfort in all the wrong things, and all the wrong places. Found acceptance in all the wrong bottles and beds. Now the routine of the work I have to do to keep my head above water, and the work I have to do because I feel it's impossible not to has evened out. My first job in Lawrence was at a fast food sandwich shop downtown. The hours were awful and I had to handle more meat then I think is really acceptable, but a job is a job, and at this point I don't intend on liking any of them. I ran the register and answered the phones for deliveries. Most of my time was spent making change and trying to decipher what the drunk college kid in front of me was trying to articulate.

I have called myself an anti-capitalist for a long time now, probably longer then I have actually understood what that term means. But the real nature of capitalism just recently started to hit me in a lot of ways I hadn't seen before. This is an embarrassing thing to say, but I am twenty years old, and the sandwich place was my first job. I've worked in the past, a lot, but never held a punch the clock--must wear a uniform--type of job. And that fact kept me separate for a long time. I'm sure it is a product of privilege, from multiple sources. Because even when I was trying to support myself and others at times, I still never needed to get a "real" job, and that fact kept me isolated from almost the entire rest of the country. And I am not advocating that everyone go out and get a job that they hate just so they can feel like they relate to a certain portion of society, but I am saying that all (or at least most) of us younger usually white anarchists look around and remember that, because it has made a world of difference in my life.

It has also opened my eyes to some really interesting issues in the other direction. It has made me not want to discount my thoughts or experiences growing up on the upside of poor, even if I am a young anarchist practically dripping with privilege. It made me realize that the hunger and jealousy of my youth are not things that should be cast aside simply because I feel bad that other people are still hungry.

There was a day that highlighted all of this perfectly… while I was working a group of middle school aged girls came in on some sort of school trip. All of them had the perfectly quaffed blonde hair and neatly accessorized outfits that signify wealth. It was pretty obvious that these 15-year-old girls had more money then I, and most people, will ever see simply based on their birth families. And of course, with that money comes the power.

In the past I have always had the ability to ignore people like that. I could walk past the private school in my old neighborhood with an air of self-respect, could feel that the choices in my life made up for the fact that I was never going to be them, but in this situation I had to

serve them, had to take their orders and do it with a smile and a thank you. Looking into their faces I realized that for the rest of my life, as long as the systems that are in place now stand strong, as long as this society continues to function in this way, I will always be beneath those girls. And I thought that having to serve cops on an almost daily basis was bad enough.

3. Since the move here, and since the break with almost all the things I knew before, the want for structure and familiarity keeps growing.

I don't recognize my own writings from just a few years ago. The person I am today has completely turned from the person I was. Once while I was at work at the shitty sandwich shop, as we were closing, a cover of "midnight special" came on the radio, and all I could do was lean on my broom and remember so many nights spent with my best friends, singing along with each other and a busted guitar. Sometimes it's a smell that brings me back to charlotte and danyell's bug infested apartment, or kates' basement, or that corner of the park we called home, the benches in that garden where we cried that time. It doesn't take much to propel me back into memories. And sometimes I wonder if that's a good thing or not, because; the lines that I have been drawing lately, between me and them, between past and present make me want to vomit up the last four years of my life. There is a realization that even though we hold each other in this high regard, circumstance may be the death of all bonds.

And I have been grasping onto memories, squeezing them too tightly between fingers and palms. Moving to Lawrence meant leaving things behind, especially the familiarity that daily contact brings to a friendship. There have been nights in the past months where I can't sleep. Where all I can do is cry and wonder if the friendships I started will continue now that I am so far away. Because state lines don't mean anything, but time will make acquaintances of us all. My friends have been my life, my reason for doing the things I do. I would pour my heart and guts all over these pages in an effort to describe them with some justice. I just hope they remember when I do.

I hope I remember them. I went back to NY not long ago, and things were different. Old friends left bad tastes in my mouth. Not because of them, not because they have changed, and not in the ways that would make me love them any less, but I realized that people grow separately. It was the realization that the one steadfast thing in my life for the last few years was gone or had changed, and that there was nothing I could do about it. None of us decided to take different paths, it's just the nature of knowing people before you or they have any idea of where you want to be. The thought that this was normal, and that this happens to everyone in some way or another jolted me from the sleepwalking I seemed to have been doing for so long. I really used to think that we'd be friends forever, that this was it, and that it would always stay the same. Looking back now, it was naïve, and it was wrong in all those ways you really hope never to be.

Now here in Lawrence, I am scrambling for friends. I want to feel close to these people the way I did with the NY kids. I want to feel the things I did with them. Which is an un-fair thing to ask from the people I am around now. It's un-fair to try and match one friendship up against another, to try and match a group of people is even worse. There is a history here. People I haven't met, or known in their past incarnations, there are inside jokes I will never understand, and there is a town that people seem to know so well that I just can't crack. I'm just going to have to live with all those things. With all those realizations that I am the new kid, which is fine, as long as I can pull myself out of it eventually.

There hasn't been a need for me to make friends in so long that I am afraid that I won't remember how.

PART II

1. It's been a while since familiarity was a part of my day. It's been a while since I've felt a connection to the city that I now call home. Mostly, it has to do with the fact that this is the season I always spend back in NY. The rainy dreary days of November have always been spent in the spaces most familiar to me. The houses and the armchairs that hold the most memory. This is my first holiday away from the people who call me daughter, when they call at all. The connection severed on my leaving has never been re-built between my mother and I. Dave says it's weird for me to have "empty nest syndrome" when I'm the one who left. But it's true. I feel like I've abandoned them. In reality, I'm the one forgotten. Phone calls from mom were things I used to expect, e-mails at the least. But just as the months have accumulated and her memory has faded the phone has stopped ringing. The occasional text-message is the only connection that still holds true. Even between people bonded by the blood that flows through them, the blood that sometimes pounded too quickly. How are bonds built with the framework of a species in mind, cast aside so easily? How are the pre-set roles reversed with such ease? And why am I sitting 1,200 miles away from the womyn, house and the city that nearly ruined me, missing it all terribly.

2. People told me that Lawrence in the fall is invigorating. And I am beginning to agree. When your job requires you to be up before the sun, you appreciate even the little bit that November gives. I work for the school bus company. Dave and my housemate jimmy are drivers there, along with two other anti-capitalist folks. I'm not old enough to drive a bus, and don't have a drivers license anyway, so I'm a monitor. The monitor works with kids with "special needs". Kids in wheelchairs, or braces, kids who can't hear and kids who don't speak English as their first language, kids who can't sit still and kids who can't see. A lot of the time I am confused by the need to lump all these kids together and put them on a "special bus" of their own. Most of my kids, (all the drivers and monitors refer to the kids they work with as "their kids"), are ESL students. There are about five different languages spoken

on my bus, and the kids have fun trying to figure ways to curse each other out in every single one of them. The only kid who really needs my help is C. He's thin and never leaves his wheel chair, his hands are stuck in permanent fists and only a neck brace keeps his head off his shoulder. He loves when I help him count to ten in Spanish. The monitors never find out what the exact diagnosis of one of their kids are, it's really none of our business anyways. Sometimes the curiosity gets to me, though. C. can't verbalize more then a few words, and when he doesn't understand what I'm saying he just says "yeah!" as loud as he can. So our conversations are kind of one sided, and a bit repetitious, but we talk as much as possible. He brightens my day and scares me half to death sometimes. I'm neither able nor trained to help him when he can't breathe. When the mucus collects in the back of his throat, or the air fills up in his stomach the best I can do is try and keep him calm until we can get to someone who can help.

Not being able to help the people you care about is the scariest thing in the world. The nightmares where friends and family in peril are just out reach are becoming more frequent. As if I've never had so much to fight for before.

3. The first time I was arrested out side of NYC was July of this year. It was also the first time I was arrested with my partner. It was an Anti-g8 march in Kansas City. The collective I'm a part of in Lawrence went as legal observers and medics. The march was small but as peaceful as could be. About ¾ of a mile after we had hit the streets the cops showed up in huge numbers. They chased a kid off his bike and up a hill. They yelled and pushed the whole march onto the sidewalk. And then I heard someone yelling for cameras, someone in a green shirt was hitting the ground in the corner of my eye. I got around the tree that was blocking my view just as four or five cops were throwing Dave to the ground. Everything in me screamed except for my voice.

I have never been that angry before, never that enraged. And there was nothing I could do to stop them. They loaded him into one car and the punches to his chest and stomach

kept coming. You could see them pile on top of him in the front seat of the cop car. And then he was out again, they moved him from car to car to car. At some point there was pepper spray, but I couldn't tell you the chronological order of events. They get all jumbled in my memory. All I remember is people running and me throwing my goggles on. I didn't want to get to far from him; I didn't want to lose sight of him. Me and other Lawrence folks were standing just a few feet from the nose of the car he was being held in, when I hit the ground. Later a videotape would show me being brought down by a huge cop, tackled from behind. I never saw him coming. Hitting the curb with my hips and stomach they had my hands behind me faster then I could believe. With one pig on each arm and another standing on my leg I was helpless. Even when I tried to hold on to the camera in my hand with all my might, they were stronger.

They picked me up by my cuffs and I couldn't find my feet. Eventually after I was more pissed than confused, I let them lead me behind the car where Dave was still sitting. They searched all my stuff, most of which I never saw again-including an eight hundred dollar digital camera that belonged to someone else. They asked me if I was the "leader of this so-called organization" and I bit my tongue so as to not spit in their face. Eventually both Dave and I were put in the same van with a perforated metal divider between us. He had a bump behind his ear, and a cut on his forehead where it had been hit against the cop car repeatedly. I tried not to cry. But I hurt, and they had hurt him, and I was in handcuffs and couldn't even hold him and make it better. The rest of the jail experience was not any different from my past ones really, except that I was by myself, in a city I didn't know, which was very different then anything I had ever done before.

The womyn I spoke with in jail were great. There was a jail solidarity rally outside my window. People drummed on anything they could find and held big signs, they chanted and gathered money for bail. It turned out that a third person had been arrested on his way home. Randomly picked up off the street and arrested. There were womyn who were eight months pregnant, womyn with medical problems not

being treated, with partners who had put them in jail in various ways. It made me mad that there weren't people sitting outside the jail every day, that the noise and affection given to us wasn't there all the time. I know that a constant jail solidarity would be neither affective or practical, but at that moment I wanted everyone outside to be banging on lampposts and bucket drums for everyone in there. I know people are, in different ways, I know people care and are fighting in almost everyway possible, but at that moment I felt awful about myself, and the privilege I too often forget.

We got bailed out late that night. So much money wasted, and so much energy misused. But that's sometimes the outcomes of street protests, and I knew that, expected that.

What I didn't expect was for such a minor thing, a small arrest in the grand scheme of it all, to effect me so much. It shook me down to the core of all that I try and keep safe. The beat up my partner, threw him to the ground with joy in their eyes, they punched him and choked him while handcuffed in the cop car, they maced my friends, attacked them with chemicals and did so while joking about it; they put me in handcuffs, they kneeled on my back and stepped on my hands, they twisted my arms and wrists until I had no choice but to comply. And I couldn't stop any of it. Not with all my strength could I have prevented it from happening.

They are going to take my friends from me. They've already started to. They're going to kill and incarcerate the people I call comrade and friend, and the nightmares are back. Where they are gunning him down in an alley, or where they are taking her to prison for a lifetime. I wake with tears in my eyes and the shakes running the course of my body and I am afraid. Afraid like I've never been before. That arrest was months ago, the charges have been dropped since then, and I've forgotten most of the details. But the feeling of helplessness lingers.

So now when C.'s crying and I can't help him, or when Dave

leave s the house alone I say the prayers that kept me safe as a child. I speak quietly to the darkness and ask it to protect the ones closest to me, so that we can all have the strength to keep fighting. The strength to keep living and breathing and making a new world where this fear can't get anyone or us anymore.

4.I have known this bond before. This bond of companionship and camaraderie, where I really love the people around me, even if I don't like them all the time. I want to break the kneecaps of all the demons in the pasts of my friends. I want to grind the skeletons in their closets into dust so that they can't haunt anymore. So that all the people around me can be free, even for just a moment. So that everyone can be free.

I have too many friends in prison. Too many people willing to call me their "sista' in the struggle", even though they've never met me. And their letters make me cry, when they speak of the hope they have, the strength they find in this network of revolutionaries that we're all trying to build. And it makes me mad, makes me mad that I can be so tired sometime. That I can be so selfish and petty, to where my personal drama keeps letters from getting answered or requests filled. I need to remember that feeling of helplessness sometimes, that feeling where I can't save the people close tome all the time, because it only makes me want to fight harder. Makes me want to tear it down with my bare hands.

And that anger, and that fear can be very good things sometimes.

Part III

1. New York at Christmas time has always depressed me. And this last trip was no different. Far from home I was surrounded by all the half-hearted, city funded Christmas decorations, and all the half-hearts. I realized those lumps of memory and recollection are actually bodies, and they're on every corner of that city. People plagued with a deepening sadness, inflicting their last revenges.

It seemed like people couldn't or wouldn't stop and look, stop and remember. There is one person I used to call friend who'd have me tie my memories into bundles and carry them on my back. Burdening myself with their weight and importance. When they should be remembered for what they were. Years where we learned the value of friendship through whiskey bottles and skateboards smashed over skulls. I scream at her through fruitless means that, "no, I will not take them lightly the way you'd wish." Because those bodies still linger. Even if they move and do the dances that somehow shape a life, they are forever stuck, dead and bloating on those corners, on those park benches and gutters.

And for once severing ties feels good. I have made the decision to keep the things important to me close even if they are far away, and I have found the place where I belong. So she can shake her snow globe and watch the white plastic pieces settle on the Tompkins Square Park she has constructed in her mind. But let me rest, and let the past be.

2.Most of Christmas day was spent in the hospital. My grandfather is a sick man, and the doctors don't know what's wrong. They stick tubes under his too thin skin, and his broad strong nose but it never brings them any answers. They let us visit on Christmas, when he should have been home with us. And my family let me sit in his seat at the dinner table, when really we should have left it empty.

He is a beautiful man, who never forgot the language and the culture that he came from. And the family that he holds dear. He's not big with words, he uses them carefully as if he was going to run out of them at any moment. But he is brilliant. An environmental scientist who fought ecological

injustice in the only way he knew how. And now some sort of sickness has ravaged his body to the point where he can't read the books he's written or the awards he's received.

My mother would not visit him in the hospital. She told us all that "she doesn't like hospitals" and I wanted to scream a venom that would burn forever. I wanted to shout and yell, because I'm sure my grandfather doesn't like hospitals either and he could have used his whole family there. But she stayed behind and watched TV. With all the escapist trappings that she is so fond of. It was the day that I finally realized that I will never be her friend and that the distance between us now, has given none of the closeness I was expecting. She will always be my mother by birth, but the bond is gone.

3. It is difficult to write about the days after Christmas, because of the phone call I got, where you cried and told me what had happened. And I cried and told you how hurt I was. And there are still too recent feelings of betrayal sitting in the tips of my fingers. They are tense with a want to not feel, a want to go back and un-do all the damage you two did. And all the damage I inflicted on myself because of it. They vibrate with the need for safe and comfortable spaces, especially when the thought of the actions you took in our room, a room designated for our children become too much to bare. This heart inside my chest beats faster when I think about how both your desires were more important than me, How, in that moment they were more important then the life we are building together. More important then the love we share for each other and this fucking new world we are building. It's been difficult to write lately…
Because I never thought you would be the one to disregard me so greatly.

But I've done my crying and screaming and drinking, I've done my share so now all that's left is to return to normalcy, at least as normal as one can feel when they lose what was the beginning of a good friendship. And to put the past where it belongs.

4. New Years was like the years before. With the exception being my sobriety. First sober new years that I could

remember, and really I am proud. I wanted it so bad, wanted every last drop of honey colored liquid I saw sliding down my friends throats. I actually stared at the droplets of whiskey running down someone's chin, trying to remember what that felt and tasted like. But I didn't give in.

The punkhouse in Brooklyn was packed with the half dressed regulars from the years before. There was a sprinkling of fresh faces though. Some were only new to me though, and it put me off balance. I thought I knew everyone, but obviously that was not and never will be the truth. People float in and out of that town so easily. And I'm one of them now. So much so that the swirling masses of bodies beating the air with half fists to the rhythm of a chumbawumba song seemed foreign and wrong. I loved to standing in the back, or sitting on the porch smoking too many free cigarettes, but somehow my desire for movement had ceased.

At about 1am I decided to call it quits and head home. I made the rounds of goodbyes and was surprised when a friend of mine asked to walk me out. We stood for a moment on the steps of the house and spoke about the crushes we had on each other. Whether past or present, it didn't really matter. He asked to kiss me, and I really wanted to say yes. But I could smell the beer on his breathe, and I promised myself a long time ago to never kiss anyone who had been drinking again. He told me how he had thought of NYC when he had seen me downtown some years ago, how I had even in a small way personified a city. And it meant more to me then I bet he realizes. Feeling cold and disconnected that night, far from home with a relationship on the rocks and a town I was feeling strange in the only things I had to return to, it was good to hear him say that. It put a little more life in my step knowing that I meant something to someone, even if it was superficial or un-important.

As I left that night, it was like a final bow. I have always put too much importance on exits and goodbyes, but that one was great. I will see those faces in the years to come, and I hope we can always be friends, and that I can always hold NY close to my heart. Even if I do hate it most of the time.